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ABSTRACT

In the metascientific theory of Jurgen Habermas are perspectives going beyond the present way of viewing knowledge and inquiry. Applied to curriculum, this theory provides a conceptual framework for expanding the present technical model. The purpose of this study is to provide technical and interpretive data about home and family life which are critically analyzed to provide knowledge useful in the development of home economics curriculum. The development of curriculum research has been hampered by the attempt to apply a reconstructed logic of physical science research. Curriculum problems are practical problems which are moral rather than technical in nature. Curriculum researchers need to acknowledge the legitimacy of the different meanings which people attach to facts and situations. The predominant model for curriculum in vocational education is occupational analysis. Several states have undertaken an occupational analysis for home economics education. The study was an outgrowth of the researcher's concern for the lack of fit between the philosophy of home economics and the occupational analysis used in vocational education. A task-oriented approach is reductionistic. A paradigm shift is proposed for research and curriculum, from a quantitative empirical perspective to a comprehensive theoretical framework that incorporates the hermeneutic and critical sciences. (Author)

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APPLICATION OF EMPIRICAL/RATIONAL AND HERMENEUTIC SCIENCE MODES OF INQUIRY TO A STUDY OF HOME AND FAMILY LIFE FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Paper presented to Midwest Regional Conference on Qualitative Research in Education, Kent State University, 1981.

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The quantitative-qualitative study which I am sharing grew out of a vocational home economics curriculum development project in Ohio. There were many factors affecting this curricular decision.

The first major factor is the differing views which people hold regarding curriculum. Some had a behaviorist position, espousing Tyler's linear four-step process: stating objectives, selecting and organizing experiences, and evaluating. In this view, behavioral objectives or competency statements are defined in highly precise, technical, and operational terms.

Others labelled this view of curriculum as narrow, echoing the curriculum reconceptualist's call for an expanded conception of curriculum. I've always had difficulty concisely explaining this view--it's sometimes labelled humanist, an amorphous term to say the least. Huber summarizes the position of the curriculum reconceptualists:

> They protest dehumanization, technological rationality, the submission of human consciousness and the fragmentation of social life. They affirm the importance of the emotions and intuition. Defining reality in terms that go beyond economic materialism to include spirituality, they criticize schools for cooperating in maintaining values which preserve social structure at the expense of the individual.

A second major influence on this curriculum project was that we were working within the framework of vocational education. The predominant model for curriculum in vocational education is occupational analysis, defined as a process that examines an occupation and lists the tasks which the occupation requires. It seemed logical for us to develop a home economics curriculum by validating the tasks which are performed in the home. And this I did in the

study. I replicated a task list developed in Colorado using the DACUM process. Using a stratified sample designed for vocational education reporting, the task list was given to 200 A/C members to our home economics programs. These persons were geographically distributed across the state.

So far this does not have a qualitative ring, so in keeping with the theme of this conference I'll attempt to bridge the gap. There is a disjuncture between the philosophy of home economics, with an aim of improving the quality of home and family life, and the technical model of curriculum. To effect a broader design of curriculum, it was essential to broaden the concept of research.

Much of my study in philosophy and curriculum converged upon the writings of Jurgen Habermas. Habermas sees his work as located between science and philosophy. He provides a systematic critique of theories of knowledge and inquiry, particularly the dominance of positivism. He analyzes and synthesizes a wide ragne of works, including the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions of inquiry.

Habermas distinguishes among three metascientific perspectives on inquiry: the empirical-rational, the hermeneutic, and the critical. Reid in Thinking About Curriculum argued that curriculum research has been hampered by attempt to apply a reconstructed logic of physical science research, e.g. statistical, experiemental, or empirical rational. He suggests that a humanist strategy of inquiry must include study of opinions, wants, and values.

Copa is a bit more specific in his critique. He charges that researchers in vocational education have a knowledge base which is

restricted to empirical methods of doing research.

A major convergence of contemporary philosophy seems to have emerged in opposition to positivistic philosophy. Phenomenology (Husserl), existentialism (Heidegger), neo-Marxism (Habermas) and hermeneutic philosophy (Gadamer) have all generated a critique of objectivism.

Roszak insists that objectivism is not "uniquely" in touch with the truth, but is an arbitrary construct in which a given society has invested meaningfulness and value."

> Science, under the technocracy, has become a total culture dominating the lives of millions for whom discussions of the theory of knowledge are so much foreign language. . . Objectivity as a state of being fills the very air we breathe in a scientific culture; it grips us subliminally in all we say, feel, and do.

Kuhn criticizes factual scientific investigation as rarely producing major novelties, conceptual or phenomenal.

> Sometimes, as in a wave-length measurement, everything but the most esoteric detail of the result is known in advance, and the typical latitude of expectation is only somewhat wider.

Can you not identify some hypothesis-testing research in which this was true?

This same trend toward positivism is present in studies of the family. In my literature review, I found that most studies tended to cluster around the effects of given characteristics of families on dependent variables such as marital satisfaction or marital stability. Prediction and control of behavior is the ultimate aim. An astounding fact to me was that the criteria for inclusion of research in the "Review and Synthesis of Research on Home Economics Education" for the past two decades included

presence or absence of guiding hypotheses. In much of qualitative research, one poses research questions. Favored consideration in this research review was given to those studies involving testing of theoretically-derived hypotheses and ones which utilized experimental or quasi-experimental desgins. This necessarily excludes hypothesis-generating research.

One set of sociological researchers, Campbell and Converse, conducted a national probability survey on the quality of American life. They asserted that it is necessary to go directly to the individual himself for his description of how his life feels to him. They concluded that this assumption will lead researchers into "the subjective world of perceptions, expectations, feelings, and values."

I believe that limitations of methodology have hindered us from studying this subjective world. As Smith says, "It is no criticism of methodology to say that it is ambiguous and vague if the reality to which it is applied is also ambiguous and vague if the reality to which it is applied is also ambiguous and vague."

> Excessive effort can be diverted from substantive to methodological problems, so that we are forever perfecting how to do something without ever getting around to doing it even imperfectly. . . By pressing methodological norms too far, we may inhibit bold and imaginative adventures of ideas.

Ross Mooney, a source of inspiration to me, has recently published a volume entitled "Research Papers: The Phenomenon of Mind." He says that while mathematics provides a magnificent order, it is not the system used by nature to give birth, to grow, to love, live, or die. He questions whether the mathematical order is necessarily the fitting order for educational research.

Mooney also writes of the significance of connecting research with self. Referring to emphasis on specified techniques of treating data and standardized ways of reporting. Mooney, an iconoclast, even suggests that such research becomes a casket into which graduate students sink their life without every discovering their mind, self, or life. A technological approach can be subtle, seductive, and deadly.

The methods of empirical-analytic science are well-formulated by such personages as Campbell and Stanley, Fischer's ANOVA, etc. Since hermeneutics and phenomenology are on the leading edge of what Kuhn would term a "paradigm shift", these methods of inquiry are less well defined.

The term "hermeneutics" was coined in the early seventeenth century to refer to the interpretation of texts. The object of hermeneutic inquiry is cultural meaning or understanding in terms of the meanings people give. Its key concepts are meaning, language, and history. Hermeneutic inquiry culminates in Verstehen, understanding, of the most deep-lying meanings. Husserl uses the term "disclosure of human life worlds." The researcher is concerned with subjective meaning. Bogdan and Taylor state:

> When we reduce people to statistical aggregates, we lose sight of the subjective nature of human behavior. . . Qualitative methods enable us to explore concepts whose essence is lost in other research approaches.

The premise for the qualitative analysis in this study lies in the assumption that there are some qualities which cannot be reduced to quantitative terms without denying their reality. It further assumes that subjective experience is knowable. The Thomas dictum applies: "If men define situations as real, they

are real in their consequences." One woman in my study described her experience as a child being abused with straps. She said, "I never deserved that." Yet her father defined the situation as punishable and the consequences were very real. Reality, then, is socially constructed.

> The sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for knowledge in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such knowledge.

The major aim of my study was to explore the meaning and significance and problems and concerns in home and family life. Since these comprehensive questions are in the exploratory stages of research, I selected less structured methods. Questionnaires and interview instruments were open-ended. When you give a check-list or questionnaire with categories pre-selected, you increase the risk that what you expect to be reported is. In essence, as a researcher, you may force your structure on the respondents.

The object of the intensive interivew is to elicit rich, detailed description of the phenomenon being investigated rather than to compute the frequency of predetermined kinds of things. Difficult to quantify variables are probably less distorted by unstructured interviewing than by an abortive effort to operationalize them for quantification by a survey.

> There is no magic in numbers; improperly used they confuse rather than clarify. (McCall and Simmons)

Recall Mooney's observation that the mathematical order is not necessarily the fitting order.

To depart from academic writings for a moment, I'd like to share this passage from <u>The Little Prince</u>.

> Grownups love figures. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, "What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?" Instead, they demand?"How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?" Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him.

I analyzed 80 questionnaires from senior high school students and 80 audio tapes of adult interviews, using the constant comparative process. It is basic to this procedure that the conceptual categories emerge from the data. One cannot simply code the data first, and then analyze. Rather the researcher constantly redesigns and reintegrates theoretical notions as the data are reviewed.

The issue of credibility of data in qualitative analysis is a major concern to researchers. Methodological rigor must be weighed against questions of significance. I found this quote particularly to the point:

> We must use all available weapons of attack, face our problems realistically and not retreat to the land of fashionable sterility, learn to sweat over our data with an admixture of judgment and intuitive rumination, and accept the usefulness of particular data even when the level of analysis available for them is markedly below that available for other data in the empirical area. (Binder cited in Webb)

The process of clarifying and probing in interviews may contribute to more reliable results than rigid indices through the provision of internal checks and responsiveness to the data.

> Quantitative researchers characterically demonstrate the validity of their findings through statistical tables and measures, and they therefore are likely to feel comfortable when defending their observations. Yet, if one were to ask them to defend the validity of the categories, one by one, upon which the tables and measures rest, they would be in essentially the same boat with the field researcher. (Schatzman and Strauss)

My conclusion in comparing the quantitative and qualitative portions of my study was that the latter was labor intensive, but yielded by far the most significant data. It required hours and hours to maintain the rigor of being certain that each statement was derived from the data.

In the remaining time, I will share some of the results of my study. There were nine questions to which senior high school students responded by questionnaire and adults through interviews. The first two questions generated imagery experiences. The first question, for example read:

> Describe words, associations, or pictures that come to your mind for the word "home." Can you picture a room? Why do you think you selected that room? What are you doing? What meaning does it have?

Certain themes emerged from this imagery question. Several respondents drew a contrast between the concept of house, a physical structure, and home. Home was described in terms of its psychological dimensions--the love and relationships contained within, as a refuge from the world, a place of security. In response to the question, "what are you doing in the room?" can you predict the answer? "Watching television." What do you suppose happened when they were pressed for a meaning to this activity? They could give none. One of the adults said she watches television because "there's nothing better to do." Many reflected that television had reduced time spent together as a family communicating.

Some saw their families together at the dinner table. Mealtime was important, not as a source of sustenance, but for the sharing of the events of the day.

Sometimes images of home expressed disharmony, as in this student's response:

> I can see my mom and stepdad. In the family room sits my stepdad watching tv. Mom is in the kitchen cooking dinner, very noisily, because she is getting no help from my stepdad. She just got home from work. My stepdad has been sitting in the same place for give weeks. My mom is depressed.

There is so much descriptive power in the quotations. How much more understanding this provides us than if the student were asked to rate his home on a scale of 1 to 5, harmonious to disharmonious.

The second question was similar to the first. Respondents were asked to picture a family. Students expressed some very profound definitions of families.

> Group of people who are able to share their thoughts and ideas and events of their day, who try to understand each other and who love each other.

> A family can consist of two or more people sharing a ..re, loving, and considering everyone's feelings.

Some mental images of families were not as pleasant. "I picture my dad as referee, my mother and brother yelling, and everyone for themselves." Some students selected pictures of families other than their own. One student pictured a father, mother, and children walking through the park on a sunny spring day, hand in hand, saying: "I never had the chance to do things like that with my family when I was little becauseof the divorce. I was forced to grow up at a very early age."

Physical abuse or violence characterized some family pictures.

> Dad comes home from the bar, starts yelling and hitting me and Mom. My brother is crying because he's so scared. It happens a lot.

Others described something missing in their family.

> When I think of family, I think of my mother standing with my sister and our dog and two cats. But I'm not in the picture. I don't feel like a part of my family.

Many respondents pictured their families at holiday times or at family reunions. Family traditions carried a lot of meaning.

The question that evolved the richest data asked respondents to recall significant experiences in their home and family life. They were asked why it was important and what maie it meaningful.

Security or dependability, described as someone there for you, was a major theme in response to this question. This was often represented as parents attending school plays and musicals and mother being home after school. One adult recalled the semll of cookies baking when he came home. Another said, "When I brought my first instrument home from school, a saxophone, my mother was there. That was important to me. For others, this was not so.

> There is a quality missing in our relationship. When children do something wrong, they are just crying for help. Parents don't answer those cries.

A portrait of her life was painted by this student as she listed first the significant experience and then its meaning for her.

> My grandmother - She was great to me. We were close. I went everywhere with her.
> My real father - I always wanted to meet him.
> My horses, cats, guinea pigs - Someone I could talk to.
> Driver's license - Got me away from home.
> My boyfriend - Showed me love.

I cannot imagine any other method of inquiry which would elicit this depth of understanding. This portrays a holistic picture of her life world--one of synthesis. A fragmented approach to studying this person would certainly not yield these kind of data.

Recollections of family activities included those that might be classified as "the little things in life." "Buying a pint of ice cream at the end of a hot summer day. I learned to appreciate little things and to understand that money doesn't buy happiness."

Family crises generated a number of significant experiences, death, illness, and divorce.

> Last year my dad died. A family is very important and sometimes it takes bad experiences that happen to make someone realize how important the family really is, how much they mean to you. I never really was close to my family, but when he died I really needed my family. Sometimes it takes bad things to make someone wake up, and I regret that.

This was a student's response to divorce.

> I recall the day my mother left and my paren'ts divorce. It was important to me because I would only have one parent after that and I wouldn't be like all the other kids anymore. They all lived with their mother and father. I realized that things were going to be different.

Another student shared as the most significant experience in her life: "My parents getting divorced and then having to go to court to see who will win me to live with them."

While divorce was frequently given as a significant experience, some perceived it as making their family happier because their parents could not live together peacefully.

The fourth question asked why homes and families are important to people. Several themes emerged from the data in response to this question. Note that they were not preselected categories. The nurturant role was stressed, helping children know they are wanted, loved, and needed. Roots was another theme. "There is something special about knowing who you are and where you came from." Families give a sense of permanence and psychological stability. Home was viewed as a haven or refuge, an escape from the outside world. Home provides love. "Everybody needs love" was a shared perception. One student wrote:

> People need lots of love. It's very important. If you don't have love, you feel unwanted. I know, and it's a really terrible feeling. Teenagers run away because they feel unwanted.

Families are accepting. You don't have to prove anything to anyone. Families accept you as you are.

The fifth question asked respondents to describe a good or "ideal" home and family life. One thread that was implicint in many responses was the importance of valuing the family. One man shared this thought:

> I thought at one time I would never marry and that I would be a bachelor all my life and not have children. Then all at once you're 65, and how do you say Merry Christmas to a blank wall?

From a business executive came this statement:

> Career needs have to be considered, but should not be your first priority. You have to know your first priority is with your own family, not career. Some younger men put their careers first and families suffer.

Said another:

> The pressures of society and pressures of earning a livelihood sometimes cause some of these needs to lose their importance until finally after you have pursued and done all that you feel is necessary to cope with life today, you feel empty and without meaning.

Busyness was decried as a major contributor to weakening the family. School activities came in for as much criticism as careers. One person summarized:

> Good family life can't be purchased. It has to be earned and has to be treasured. It is never static; it's always moving. You can't regard it as an expensive vase that's going to be there forever. Today is the most important day in my family's life.

In closing, there was a sense of fervency as people expressed their belief in the family as an enduring institution which will

remain as the source of fulfillment of basic human needs for love, security, and non-conditional acceptance. Even those in unhappy homes still saw families as important, while expressing hope for a better future. Families are a source of deep satisfaction. They provided roots, a place to be from, and an enduring purpose in life. This fervency and the meanings given family experiences could not be communicated in closed-ended responses.

I will conclude by telling you that this study has had a significant impact upon curriculum development in Ohio.

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